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Culture of peace

Elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion

Question of Palestine

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Letter dated 7 April 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, at the Forum on Islamic-Christian Dialogue held in Doha, State of Qatar, on 7 April 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 24, 31, 35, 36 and 77, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 7 April 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Grace, the Most Reverend Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to Doha. I wish you success in achieving the objectives of your seminar, which is being held, without a doubt, under extremely difficult circumstances, namely the war now taking place in our region. We have done everything in our power to avert that war and limit its repercussions. The current grievous situation imparts to your seminar profound dimensions and great significance, inasmuch as it is aimed at peace and the revitalization of the lofty values and principles of Islam and Christianity. Indeed, both are founded on the belief in the oneness of the Creator; both preach brotherliness, equality, tolerance and moderation and the rejection of violence; and both call for respect for human rights, the preservation of the dignity of the human being and the protection of his life and property.

It is those supreme values that have been the fundamental common denominators between the two religions and cultures over the centuries.

Perhaps it is useful to recall that the Holy Qur'an enjoins us not to argue with the People of the Book except in the kindliest manner and to summon others to the right path with wisdom and gentle exhortation.

We therefore pray God to grant you success in your endeavours so that the dialogue among civilizations may win out over the challenges and obstacles. We feel certain that your exalted rank and your open-mindedness will enable you to deal, during this seminar, with everything that might stand in the way of enlightened cooperation between the people of the two faiths.

Perhaps the most serious of those obstacles are related to two major problems:

1. Diverting the revealed religions from the essence of their message and impressing their doctrines into the service of political aims;

2. Judging an entire nation on the basis of the behaviour of a handful of extremists or ignorant people and taking some of their actions as a basis for labelling the whole nation, distorting its civilization, threatening its interests and doing injustice to its established principles.

In our opinion, these are the root causes of the distorted and erroneous stereotypes of Islam and Christianity we see taking root in various places. They are propagated by the media and racist writers, widening the gap between the followers of the two religions and replacing harmony with discord and dialogue with conflict.

Amid the flood of historical changes now taking place, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Arab region was honoured by the Almighty God with the revelations of Moses and Jesus as well as the dawn of the religion of the Prophet

Muhammad. Arabs, be they Muslims, Christians or Jews, have lived in peace, security and brotherhood in faith, vying with one another in goodness and generosity. Yet for the last half-century the land of the prophets and religions has been suffering from a lack of security, peace and stability owing to continued Arab-Israeli struggle without any just solution, due to the absence of any international legitimacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have high expectations from your seminar. We hope that your discussions and studies will take up the roots of these obstacles in depth and that you will arrive at practical mechanisms for furthering dialogue. I take this opportunity to propose to you the creation of a permanent body for dialogue between Islam and Christianity having its headquarters in Qatar, which believes in the value of such dialogue among civilizations and in the principles of love, tolerance and mutual consultation among societies and nations. Qatar would be honoured to contribute its share to efforts aimed at deeper understanding, rapprochement and greater cooperation between Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

In conclusion, I wish you success and a pleasant stay in Doha.

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.